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UNCLAS HARARE 002015

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION WSSD; HARARE

¶1. Under headline "Demonstrations a seal for land reforms" the government-controlled daily "Chronicle" dedicated its September 2 editorial to criticizing the West for failing to endorse the land reform program in Zimbabwe. Excerpts:

¶2. "Some Western leaders have been working tirelessly to isolate Zimbabwe through the use of targeted sanctions and vicious condemnation of its land reforms. However, events unfolding in South Africa at the WSSD and elsewhere, have shown beyond any doubt that the devious machinations to throttle Zimbabwe have only served to cement African unity, and isolated the likes of Blair and Bush. Several conferences and demonstrations are being held alongside the summit in South Africa as people try to register their anger over the way 'development' has been managed, leading to the destabilization of the environment. . . It was quite interesting that the demonstrators who applauded the President lambasted British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair and American President, Mr. George Bush. The West should read the signs that Africans can no longer be taken for granted. . . The land issue is a thorny one in the region since land ownership is still skewed in favor of whites. . . The calls for land cannot therefore die down before this anomaly is addressed throughout the region and attended to quickly, since the Western countries are ganging up against such initiatives to stall the redistribution of land held by their kith and kin. We implore the Western leaders to read the mood of the people of Africa and come to their senses instead of trying to propagate notions that will not bring food to our people's tables. It is not too late for the West to give land reforms in the region all the support the programs need. This would also safeguard their descendants against future wars over land.

". . .The people have spoken, and said that the land issue is an African issue and we hope the likes of Blair and Bush are listening. Their efforts to divide Africans were dealt another major blow at the weekend when it was revealed by Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique that they were not involved in U.S. plans to remove President Mugabe as the Americans claimed. . . Zimbabwe is ready to defend its sovereignty and would do so with pride since it will be defending its land, with the full support of fellow Africans in the region. We are sure Bush and Blair are now feeling isolated and irrelevant, since there is so much principled anger against them across the continent. Bush even feared to attend the conference!"

SULLIVAN